



The scope of comparative literary studies: Review of schools of study

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This paper provides a description of the development of the ‘Study of Comparative Literature’; its naming, origins, schools of study, and scope of study. From the inception of Comparative Literature, ‘what is’ Comparative Literature and its study have been a matter of question, both from inside the earliest schools of study in France and beyond its borders. De Certeau’s “Practice Theory” has been employed seeking to resolve the cultural and linguistic differences in the name of the field, as well as the subject of study. Then, the social and theoretical influences which differentiate the dominant French and rivalling American schools of Comparative Literature are outlined. These serve as a background for the introduction of Post-Colonial Studies. Examples of the expanding range of studies in Comparative Literature are presented, including remarks of their ‘acceptedness’ as Comparative Literature, or not.

Key words: *Comparative Literature, Schools of Comparative Literature, De Certeaus’s ‘Practice Theory’, Post-Colonial Studies.*

Introduction

At first glance, the term ‘comparative literature’ raises more questions than it answers. And in many ways Comparative Literature is a fluid field of study as its name suggests. The focus of this paper is to delve into the development of the terminology as a means of understanding the schools of study which branched forth from it. The divergent evolution of the theories of these schools has attempted to be reconciled in ‘modern’ Comparative literature. Strengthened by incorporating developments in modern literary critique, Modern Comparative Literature advances a methodological approach of the entire literary work. The progeny of Modern Comparative Literary Theory is a new generation of ‘studies’, expanding



beyond the once narrow understanding of the field to a dynamic interdisciplinary approach to literature. This pressing of its boundaries further and further has raised questions about where its limits are and whether its' current limits should still be considered 'studies of comparative literature'. Let's take a close look at Comparative Literature.

Terminology

Comparative Literature

A field of study requires a shared understanding of intent of what is to be the material of studied by its scholars. And this is where difficulties begin in Comparative Literature. Following one approach to understanding the meaning, the name is divided into its constituting parts, defined separately and then re-joined considering their relationship to each other. So, in order to compare literature, a definition of what 'is' literature should be established and then apply to this the concept of 'comparative'. What comes to the surface quite apparently is that this causes a semantic dilemma. According to Toshiko Izutsu semantics studies the technical distinctions between the 'basic' meaning and the 'relational' meaning (Izutsu, 1964). Izutsu adds that this "'relational' side of a word-meaning requires a minute and careful investigation into the general cultural situation of the age and the people...For, after all, what we call the 'relational' meaning is nothing other than the concrete manifestation, or crystallization of the spirit of the culture..." (Izutsu, 1964)

Here it is evident that another layer of complication is added to conceptualization of the term, culture. For if the term literature had been established in English, then, an analysis of what is 'literature' and 'comparative' in this one culture could begin. Yet 'Comparative Literature' is a translation from the French "Littérature Comparée" (Bassnett, 1993). So, we should begin with historically and culturally accurate linguistic translation. According to Susan Bennett, translation is based on the general assumption that there is a prior existence of a notional equivalent between systems is problematized. Sapir-Whorf hypothesizes,

"No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached." (Sapir, 1956)

We can see an inherent difficulty in defining what Comparative Literature is based on the accumulation of semantic and cultural layers of meaning attached to it.

Using a second perspective, Mahmoud Tarshoona, has attempted to understand the term Comparative as it has been practiced by scholars in the field. His approach is to understand Comparative Literature, not by what it has called itself, but rather by what it points to as Comparative Literature.

"...إذا تمعنا في العبارة لاحظنا أنها تنطبق على الأدب المدرس لا على الدراسة نفسها في حين أنها تطلق على البحوث التي تتناول المقارنة بين الآداب. وربما كان الأولى أن تطلق على هذا العلم اسم "البحث المقارن" (بكسر الراء) الذي يعالج¹ الأدب المقارن (بفتح الراء)..."

He points out the apparent contradiction in the intended meaning and the actual meaning. This is a point well made in Arabic. And this is a reference to a common spelling error (as diacritical marks are often left out in Arabic texts) which changes the word from being the agent of action to the recipient of the action. However, this leads to questions being raised. Does the term Comparative actually suffer from the same grammatical case change in the language which it was coined? Or is this a residual of translation?

A separate in-depth study of the implications of translation and the semantic assumptions attached to the term Comparative Literature is recommended.

In order to remove the definition of key terms from the translation quandary, I recommend following Tarshoona's example. He has explained the complication of language and pointed to the importance of how the field has 'practiced' these terms to be indicative of their meanings. This follows Michel de Certeau's 'Practice Theory'. The underlying principles of which are that ways of operating are not merely an obscure background of social activity, they do in fact correspond to a body of theoretical questions, methods, categories, and perspectives. They conform to certain rules and there is a logic to these practices (de Certeau, 1984). In short, Comparative Literature is, as Comparative Literature does.

The earliest uses of the term "Comparative Literature" found in a range of European languages. According to Bassnett, "There is general agreement that comparative literature acquired its name from a series of French anthologies used for the teaching of literature, published in 1816 and entitled *Cours de littérature comparée* ..." (Bassnett, 1993) Tarnoosha adds that Villemain taught courses at Sorbonne in Comparative Literature in 1828 and Sainte Beuve used the term Comparative Literature in his writings since 1868.² René Wellek suggests that the German version of the term "*vergleichende Literturegeschichte*" first appeared in a book by Moriz Carrière, in 1854. (Wellek, 1970) And the earliest English usage, "comparative literatures" (plural) is attributed to Matthew Arnold, in 1848. (Arnold, 1848)

According to R. P. McDermott and Henry Tylbor, 'collusion' refers to how members help each other to posit a particular state of affairs. Following McDermott and Tylbor's

¹(If we scrutinize the term, we notice that it applies to the literature which is studied, as well as, research concerned with comparison between literatures. Perhaps the first term which was given 'comparative' deals with 'compared' literature.)

محمود طرشونة, 1986, *مدخل إلى الأدب المقارن وتطبيقه على ألف ليلة وليلة* د ن: تونس ص 8

² طرشونة 1986 ص 7

assumption that collusion exists and some minimal consensus on what is getting done represents an achievement, (McDermott and Henry, 1985) we are then able to consider these events as the developments toward a field of study. We can then devise from these first usages of the term Comparative Literature that it was practiced in the first half of the nineteenth century in various locations within a geographically confined area, namely Western Europe. A denial of collusion would then categorize the use of this term as random and non-beneficial.

Historical evidence suggests that collusion was present and that a well-defined practice of Comparative Literature was understood. Bassnett extends that the term “derived from a methodological process applicable to the sciences, in comparing (or contrasting) served as a means of a hypothesis.” (Bassnett, 1993) This scientific approach is evident in Philarète Chasles’ inaugural lecture at the Athénée³ in 1835, entitled *Littérature étrangère comparée*,

“Let us calculate the influence of thought upon thought, the manner in which the people are mutually changed, what each of them has given, and what each of them has received; let us calculate also the effect of this perpetual exchange upon the individual nationalities...” (Chasles, 1835)

In this speech, we find a classic scientific division of units to be studied, as if they could be entered into a formula and it would then provide the result. But what is more profound is that Chasles was presenting this speech in an inaugural address for the teaching of a university course. The study of Comparative Literature had become accepted in academia, a process for study had been developed wherein questions and methods were agreed upon and, moreover, the pronouncement of such studies was worthy of an inauguration event.

Comparative Literature’s scientific approach was not unique during this era. It was preceded by a range of ‘Comparative Studies’: Comparative Semitics, Comparative Anatomy 1800-1805; Comparative Biology, 1817; Comparative Legislation; Comparative Mythology; Comparative Grammar.⁴ Tarshoona continues that this approach was related to the revelation of Darwin’s studies. This was a new system of classification into types with a branching hierarchical relationship.

The environment to support the development of Comparative Literary studies was broad. At first some of these studies were individual research efforts and did not incorporate the term Comparative Literature in their title, yet the works embody the study. For example, the Swiss author Sismondi’s publication of The Literature of Central Europe, a work which compares

³ This speech is also referred to as having occurred at *Collège de France*

طرشونة, 1986, مرجع سابق, ص 19

⁴ طرشونة, 1986, مرجع سابق, ص 17

European Literatures, in 1813.⁵ Other publications were explicitly Comparative Literature; Sainte Beuve's writings, 1868.⁶

The British author H. Helen's 1837 work, A Comparative Study of European Literature from the Fifteenth to Seventeenth Centuries, is considered to have led to continued theoretical study in England and the publication of Comparative Literature, in 1866.⁷

However, before a discussion of these early efforts in Comparative Literature and their development into schools of theory can be partaken, the components of Comparative Literary study need to be defined.

Components of Comparative Literature

As pointed out in Chasles speech, "influence...manner...(and) received" are the three essential components necessary to calculate the created effect in Comparative Literature. These main components of Comparative Literature have remained essential to the field, although different schools have placed greater or lesser emphasis on them as the field has developed and expanded its limits.

These components have been defined by Muhammad Ganaymi Hilal as the Influencer, the Influenced and the Channels of Influence. A fundamental requirement of comparison is that the Influence and the Influenced are from different languages.⁸ A division into these three components is consistent, yet different schools may assign them different names. AlManjy AlShamly had described these divisions as:

The Influencer (The Transmitter, The Producer, The Origin, The Source): This is an essential unit which can be discerned by the fingerprints which it has left on the studied work.

The Influenced (The Receiver, The Recipient, The Follower): Required to be from a different language than the Influencer.

Channels of Influence (The Means): This is what brought the Influencer and the Influenced together, be it a person, place or thing.⁹

Several names are listed for each category by AlShamly, without giving a preference to the usage of any one name over another. Here again following 'practice theory', how scholars have approached this study and related each subdivision to each other is key to Comparative Literature, not the actual term given to each of them.

⁵ المرجع نفسه ص 20

⁶ المرجع نفسه ص 7

⁷ المجمع نفسه ص 20-21

⁸ محمد غنيمي هلال, 1970, الأدب المقارن, د ن: القاهرة ص 9

⁹ المنجي الشملي, 13 ديسمبر 1980, ذكر هذه العناصر الثلاثة في بحث ألقاه في ندوة ((علم النص)) في معهد القومي لعلوم التربية بتونس

We give an analogy from Ray L. Birdwhistell, to describe the study Comparative Literature. He says, “I like to think of it as a rope. The fibres that make up the rope are discontinuous; when you twist them together, you don’t make them continuous, you make the thread continuous...The thread has no fibres in it, but if you break up the thread, you can find the fibres again...” (McDermott and Tyblor, 1985) In Comparative Literature, we can study the fibres, or the threads, or the rope; the components.

The focus of study of any of the particular elements has led to the development of different schools of Comparative Literature. The formation of these schools of thought and the elements which they have placed importance is the subject of the following section.

Development of Comparative Literature Studies

Without a doubt authors have employed the term comparative literature in titles of their works, which pre-date this movement in the mid-eighteenth century. Shafia’ Alsayyid notes that Francis Merz used it as early as 1596 in a published article, “Comparative Research of Our British Poetry with Greek, Latin and Italian”. And it came up time and again. In 1602, William Fullbeck published “The Comparative Study of Laws”. In 1800, Charles Dobden published a lengthy five-volume work; “The Complete History of British Theatre with an Introduction Comparison with Theatre in Asia, Greece, Roman, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, German, and French and Other Theatres”. However, Alsayyid calls this a counterfeit usage of the term as it they did not carry the meaning (of Comparative Literature), and any author come up with the term and use it to measure, such that we can say ‘Comparative Potatoes’, or ‘Comparative Peals’. ¹⁰ Matthew Arnold first described Comparative Literature in 1848 having been misused in the past fifty years by the British, in compared with Europe. (Arnold, 1895)

Discussions of literature and its comparison were situated a Europe undergoing change. Growth of nationalism movements led to Nationalist Literature. This was the accumulation of narratives to strengthen a national identity, create a space for it and establish its existence. These immediately created an ‘other’ and could be used not only in defence of their cause, but in the wrong hands as discriminatory against ‘others’. (Bassnett,1993); (Said, 1985); (Jakubowicz,1994) ¹¹ Bassnett concludes that Comparative Literature offered a sense of transcendence of the narrowly nationalistic and was associated with a desire for peace in Europe, a harmony between nations. (Bassnett,1993)

¹⁰ شفيع السيد, 1989, *فصول من الأدب المقارن*, دار الفكر والعربي: القاهرة, ص7-8

¹¹ For further discussion of Nationalism in Literature see

طرشونة, 1986, مرجع سابق, ص7 و 19-18 و السيد, 1989, مرجع سابق, ص12-13

And it was the beginning of World Literature, which attempted to break down these barriers and include all literature into a single ‘world’ literature. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Weltliteratur* held that it was “the common property of all mankind”. (Goethe, 1973) Even to Goethe, this vision was an ideal, where each nation would play its part in a universal concert. (Wellek and Austin, 1963)

Reflecting on the authentic beginnings of Comparative Literature, we see individual scholarly practice, and publication of research which was contrast to the growing Nationalist Literature and World Literature Movements in Europe. Comparative Literature scholars sought not to create an individual or a whole Literature, instead they chose a methodological approach to studying the effect of literatures upon each other. Exemplary of their dedication to this study were such pioneers as Madame de Staël. Tarshoona explains that she had been influenced by German literature which she continued to publish in France after Napoleon exiled her to Switzerland. Here she formed a literary circle at Coppet Castle in the coast of Lake Geneva. While this circle entertained the greatest authors of her time, she employed a methodological approach to comparing German and French literatures.¹²

From an informal literary circle, Comparative Literature study progressed to formal Comparative Literature courses: in France by Villemain at Sorbonne from 182¹³; by Ampère at Marseille from 1830, and by Chasles at Athénée from 1835; in Switzerland from 1863; in Italy by Eduar Rod and Marc Mounier from the mid-nineteenth century; in the Soviet Union by Alexander Veslovski from 1870; and in the United States from the end of the nineteenth century. (Bassnett, 1993)¹⁴

It is after the institutional instruction and study of Comparative Literature in Universities that the ‘schools’ of associated theory and methodologies developed. Starting in France and then expanding outwards, like a ripple on a pond. The approaches to Comparative Literary study have extended in many directions.

Schools of Comparative Literature

Schools of Comparative Literature developed each reflecting different levels of importance to the study of the components and/or different limitations acceptable forms of the components. Each referred to their study as Comparative Literature and at times some denied that other schools were in fact practicing Comparative Literature properly. Each school has set itself apart from others in the way that they ‘practiced’ Comparative Literature.

¹² طرشونة, 1986, مرجع سابق, ص 16

Although Tarshoona does not cite exact dates when this literary circle took place, he does place it in the early nineteenth century. This is based on the his citing of de Staël having living from 1766-1817 and her publications; *In Literature*, 1800; *Delphine*, 1802, *Corine*, 1810, and *About Germany* 1813.

¹³ Tarshoona cites this year as 1828, Bassnett cites it as 1829.

¹⁴ طرشونة, 1986, مرجع سابق, ص 18-21

German School

This school was known for its studies of folklore, popular literature, and epics, acknowledging that epics lie on the edge between oral and written literatures.¹⁵ In his journal, *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literaturgeschichte*, Max Koch praised his fellow scholar, Johann Friedrich Herder, as he has “opened up one of the most fertile and extensive areas of comparative literary history”. Translation of poetry and folksong, set against a German “point of departure”, was considered fundamental to Comparative Literature. (Koch, 1887)

This interest in the *folk* was a movement in Germany which was in contrast to the French idea of *le peuple*. As Timothy Brennan points out:

“In Germany, Herder transformed Rousseau’s ‘people’ into the *Volk*. The significance of this latter concept is its shift from Rousseau’s Enlightenment emphasis on civic virtue to a woollier Romantic insistence on the primordial and ineluctable roots of nationhood as a *distinguishing feature* from other communities. Each people was now set off by the ‘natural’ characteristics of language, and the intangible quality of a specific *Volkgeist*.” (Brennan, 1990)

It is this understanding of ‘the people’ which pushed German Comparative Literature to the studies of ‘folk literature’, whereas we will see, the French School did not consider this Literature and therefore unworthy of study.

French School

The French School flourished at the in the first half of the nineteenth century with an approach to Comparative Literature as the historical study of the relationships between Literatures.¹⁶ This school placed emphasis on study of all three components of Comparative literature with particular emphasis on the Channels of Influence.¹⁷ Hilal adds that this is a study of the does not concern itself with the stylistic aspects, nor with analysis of the text.¹⁸ The French Perspective appears to be oriented more towards the study of cultural transfer, always with France as either the giver or receiver. (Bassnett, 1993)

نذير العظمة, 2007, *قضايا الأدب المقارن: دراسة في التبادل والرموز والأساطير بين الآداب العربية والأجنبية*, الهيئة العامة السورية للكتاب: دمشق ص 6

"تميز بدراسة الفولكلورية والآداب الشعبية كما في الاتجاه الألماني ودراسة الأساطير تتداخل مع هذا الاتجاه تتفرع منه أو يتفرع منها ولو أن الأسطورة مشاع بين الآداب الشفهية والمكتوب على حد سواء"

Trans. Newberry

أحمد درويش, 1984, *الأدب المقارن النظرية والتطبيق*, مكتبة الزهراء: القاهرة ص 19 و محمد غنيمي هلال, 1987, *الأدب المقارن*, دار العودة: بيروت, ص 18

الطرشونة, 1986, مرجع سابق, ص 25 و العظمة, 2007, مرجع سابق, ص 6

هلال, 1987, مرجع سابق, ص 12

This is evident in Chasles 1835 speech. He did not hide the idea that he did not consider all nations equitable. “France is the most sensitive of all countries...what Europe is to the world, France is to Europe”. (Chasles, 1835) Rather Bassnett explains that he was portraying a “double vision (which) enabled him to make claims for the unbiased nature of comparative literature, whilst simultaneously proclaiming French superiority”. (Bassnett, 1993)

By 1840 Comparative Literature was an established study in France. Its study spread to other areas, such as Leon. Where Joseph Texte taught and was Chair until his death in 1900 and then was succeeded by Ferdinand Baldensperger. A Chair of Comparative Literature was later created at the Sorbonne in 1910.¹⁹

There was such a level of interest in Comparative Literature that in Paris, 1900, when a world conference of historians met for their sixth annual conference, the topic was the history of Comparative Literature. Herein, scholars called for the creation of a world foundation for the history of Comparative Literature with the intent of facilitating studies in France or by French scholars abroad.²⁰

According to some scholars, Baldensperger’s article is considered to be the first theoretical work in this field. Entitled *Le mot et la chose*, it was published in the first edition of the French journal in Comparative Literature, *La Revue de la litterature Comparee*, 1921.²¹ Baldensperger was even called the Father of Comparative literature in France and this work the Bible of the French School.²² While other scholars hold that Paul Van Tieghem’s work published in 1931 is the first theoretical work. Van Tieghem and Baldensperger were both influential in encouraging a binary approach to Comparative Literature. Van Tieghem went to great lengths to set up exclusion zones based on carefully formulated criteria. Comparative Literature should study the impact of works by named individuals. And it should not include oral literature, anonymous literature and collective or folk literature. Nor is it acceptable to compare two writers working in English, regardless of whether one was Canadian and the other Kenyan. (Bassnett, 1993) This approach was applied by Marius Francois-Guyard’s in his book entitled, *La Litterature Comparee*, 1951.²³

Carré wrote the introduction to Guyard’s text. Here he was concerned with the role of Comparative Literature. He explains the scholar should be a historian of literature, a

¹⁹ طرشونة, 1986, مرجع سابق, ص 19

²⁰ أحمد طاهر مكي, 1987, *الأدب المقارن أصوله وتطويرة ومنهجه*, دار المعارف: القاهرة, ص 72-74

²¹ مكي, 1987 مرجع نفسه, ص 74 و سعيد علوش, 1987, *مكونات الأدب المغارن في العالم العربي*, الشركة العالمية للكتابات: لندن, ص 56 و حسام الخطيب, 1992, *آفاق الأدب المقارن عربيا وعالميا*, دار الفكر المعاصر: بيروت, ص 83

²² مكي, 1987, مرجع سابق, ص 72-74

²³ درويش, 1987, مرجع سابق, ص 19 و طرشونة, 1986, مرجع سابق, ص 25

historian of literary relations, competent in several languages, capable of uncovering comparative works and able to prove this relation with sources.²⁴

There was not a complete agreement with the French School as to the methodology of study. Guyard and Jean Marie Carré agreed with Van Tieghem's opinion of the necessity of proof of either direct or indirect influence between the Influencer and the Influenced vis-à-vis Channels of Influence.²⁵ Yet, Guyard, Carré and René Entiemble tried to move beyond Van Tieghem's binary principles (Bennett, 1993).

American School

It wasn't until 1958 (Bassnett, 1993), at the second international conference of Comparative Literature that the American School broke away from the French methodological hegemony, in what was called 'The Crisis of Comparative Literature'.²⁶ According to Bassnett, René Wellek based his essay, 'The Crisis of Comparative Literature' on the talk which he gave previously. Here he made a strong attack on what he saw was obsolete methodology and partisan nationalism and wrestled with problems that had long since ceased to have any relevance. He laid blame on the French school: (Bassnett, 1993)

“All these floundering are only possible because of Van Tieghem, his precursors and followers conceive of literary study in terms of nineteenth century positivistic factualism, a study of sources and influences...They have accumulated an enormous mass of parallels, similarities, and sometimes identities, but they have rarely asked what these relationships are supposed to show except possibly the fact of one writer's knowledge and reading of another writer.” (Wellek, 1963)

We can assess from this, a new concept of what constitutes Comparative Literature. Firstly, it included all literature produced as a result of contact between two Literatures or Peoples. And secondly (and uniquely 'American'), all literature that does not have clear signs of contact between two Literatures or Peoples is excluded from Comparative Literature.²⁷

Wellek was not just pointing fingers at the French School. As a Yale professor, he was directly concerned with teaching and applying his critique. What Wellek called the 'Crisis in Comparative Studies' was a critique of several French School constraints; the necessity to specify the subject and methodology of study; understanding the cultural influence in the

24 ماريوس فرانسوا غويار, 1988, *الأدب المقارن*, ترجمت هنري زغيب, منشورات عويدات: بيروت, ص 15-16

25 طرشونة, 1986, مرجع سابق, ص 25

26 درويش, 1987, مرجع سابق, ص 103

27 درويش, 1987, مرجع سابق, ص 22-23

work and exposing and confirming the Influencer and Influenced.²⁸ Although perhaps not the first Comparative Literary scholar to question what his field of study was actually accomplishing, Wellek raised the red flag. Fellow scholar, Lowry Nelson, Jr. goes so far as to describe his awe of Comparative Literary Study,

“what is most momentous is not the theoretical pronouncement but the continuing practice of practicing authors in constituting for themselves a creatively chosen and multifarious tradition without any prescribed or predictable bounds.” (Nelson, 1988)

This view is in contrast to the bounds placed upon the study Van Tieghem and raised questions of validity for his boundaries of study.

The foundation which the American School built upon was the importance of studying the literature and its cultural ties. This is what they believed defined the type of literature, not the language. So, for them a comparative study of American and English authors was possible.²⁹

The American School widened the understanding of Comparative Literature and did not require Channels of Influence, direct or indirect, between Literatures of comparison.³⁰ The considered the artistic and stylistic elements central to the comparison and sought to uncover such similarities exist at a Humanist level.³¹ This perspective also gives importance to the inner textual analysis rather than to the external forces upon literature.³²

At the same time when Wellek was concerned with the boundaries and subject matter of study, Henry Remak opened the doors of Comparative Literature to Comparative Studies of other fields. In Remak’s 1958 speech at Chapel Hill, he sought to study the influences in Literature of other arts, such as drawing, sculpture, architecture, music, philosophy, history, and social sciences such as economics, sociology and religious studies. (Remak, 1973)³³

Reconciliation School

Interest in a different solution to the ‘Crisis of Comparative Literature’ came after an international conference of Communist scholars, in Budapest, 1962. The French scholar Entiemblo sought a holistic approach of the different methodologies. According to Tarshoona, he did not want to bring forth a new approach which would lead to division between scholars, rather he saw previous attempts as both essential, as well as, complementary.³⁴

²⁸ علوش, 1987, مرجع سابق, ص 107

²⁹ محمد عبد السلام كفاقي, 1981, في الأدب المقارن, دار النهضة العربية: بيروت, ص 24

³⁰ علوش, 1987, مرجع سابق, ص 100

³¹ حسام, 1992, مرجع سابق, ص 30

³² طرشونة, 1986, مرجع سابق, ص 28

³³ طرشونة, 1986, مرجع سابق, ص 28 و العظمة المترجم, مرجع سابق, ص 17-18

³⁴ طرشونة, 1986, مرجع سابق, ص 29

Their approach to the Comparative Literary study was neither French nor American. This school was based on two principles: historical ethics and the search for cultural identity.³⁵ Comparative Literature was no longer bound to comparison based on literature of different languages, literature was considered to be a product of cultures.

Language, Culture and a 'New' Direction

Common practice in the German, French and American Schools of was a constant definition of 'other'. Although the American's tried to reconcile this vis-à-vis a Humanist methodology, one thing was clear, that not all Literatures were created equal, and not all people were created equal. They all compared the world's literatures in reference to themselves. They did not take up the study of two 'other' literatures. This internal assumption was not questioned until after the scholars from 'new' nations in the wake of the fall of colonialism.

Dirks explains the relationship between culture, nation and colonialism.

“Claims about nationality necessitated notions of culture that marked groups off from one another in essential ways, uniting language, race, geography, and history in a single concept. Colonialism encouraged and facilitated new claims of this kind, re-creating Europe and others through its histories of conquest and rule.” (Dirks, 1992)

This was the dirty secret that no one talked about. Colonialism and its affects were not studied until recently. And Dirks relates that historical distancing has made “Colonialism...now safe for scholarship.”

Theorists and authors Jacques Derrida and Pierre Bourdieu have exposed the part played by the institutionalized power, which have masqueraded as universal liberalism. (Bassnett, 1993) This new field of Post-Colonial Literary Studies has arisen since the 1990s. The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures (Ashcroft et al., 1989) is an example of such literature. Here Literatures of different cultures, defined by the 'colonizer' upon the 'colonized', are studied in a methodological approach. All of the components of Comparative Literature are practiced. This has led scholars to question, “When scholars write about post-colonial literature in comparison to 'others', is this not but Comparative Literature in a different name?” (Bennett, 1993)

Directions and Applications of Comparative Literary Theory in Literature Studies

As is evident by the broad understanding of what constitutes Comparative Literature and different theoretical approaches, studies have been conducted in many different directions.

علوش, 1987, مرجع سابق, ص 78-79³⁵

Interest in particular areas of study has waxed and waned over time. Some have been favoured by one school and denied by others. And it may seem Comparative Literature's new fields of interest have little relationship to original scholarship, or each other for that matter. Follows is a sample list of directions which Comparative Literature has taken. This does propose to be a complete listing as such a list may in fact be impossible to create. It does include new applications of Comparative Literary Theory at its very edge of study.

Historicizing Comparative Literature

This is the search for the earliest forms of Comparative Literature. Nelson explains that "what is now institutionalized as Comparative Literature has, of course, a pedigree that can be variously traced – back to Aristotle." (Nelson, 1988) Tarshoona gives an example of this, asserting that the roots of Comparative Literature extend to the 146 BC. He cites the amicable attitude by the Romans in studying Greek works in order to enhance their own works.³⁶ These studies establish the study historically as example of practice before this practice was called Comparative Literature.

Dictionaries of Comparative Literature

In an effort to facilitate study by other scholars, dictionaries of Comparative Literature have been compiled. The Bibliography of Comparative Literature is a compilation of 30,000 works of literature. In 1978, a series of such dictionaries on sub-topics were published: Dictionary of Symbols and Literary Themes, Dictionary of Literary Types and Characters, and Dictionary of Literary Personalities (Aziza, 1978).

These early works were concerned with broad topics across Literatures. More specific works were published in areas of higher interest in study. They include articles by multiple authors yet, revolve around a central subject. Other works have become too large and cumbersome to print and update they have been made available on the internet or in the form of e-books. One such example is The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia.

These types of publications facilitate study and expand the community of scholars of Comparative Literature.

Studies of Literary Types

This has direction has early roots in the field of Comparative Literature. It has been heavily influenced by Darwin's scientific division of animals in to species and sub-species and by Bruntiere's evolutionary concept. They looked back at the three known types of literature of

طرشونة, 1986 , مرجع سابق, ص 13 36

the Greeks and Romans' the epic, the comedy and the tragedy. And then they traced the development of different literary types. Types were labelled Monogenous or Polygeneous.³⁷

This approach is problematic, as it Eurocentric and does not account for new types of literature, such as the autobiography, or literary types non-native to Europe.

Studies of Literary Themes

German scholars refer to this as *stoff und motivgeschichte*. French scholars call it *thematologie*. And American scholars name it 'thematology', or 'thematics'. Again, as we have seen with differences shades of meaning in translating Comparative Literature, we do not have agreement between the different schools that they are referring to the same thing.³⁸

Makki explains the study of themes as the recurring elements of the story, or as the relationship of the living thing to others and his environment in a specific time and place.³⁹

Study of Personalities and Characters

This field of interest has branched out into more specific areas; Legendary characters, Modern characters, and stereotypes based on real or imagined persons. Drawing primarily upon Western Literature, this field is less than complete.⁴⁰ This area concerns identity construction; how we narrate ourselves and others.

The 'Other' in Literature

There is a great interest in this area. It includes the projection of persons, and places which differ from ourselves. These study of these projected images from literature and how they differ from reality. Having it beginnings with Voltaire and Madame de Staël, the European 'other' was an early interest. Examples of this study include; Jost, 1956, *La Suisse dans las lettres francaises â travers les âges* and Lortholary, 1951, *Le Mirage russe en France au XVIII siècle*.

The study of 'other' has expanded with the fall of Colonialism. And it can be said that the tables were turned when the Indian author Swapan Majumdar compared his literature to the 'Western'. He argues, "Indian Literature...should be compared not with any single literature of the West, but with the concept of Western Literature as a whole." (Majumdar, 1987)

³⁷ طرشونة, 1986, مرجع سابق, ص 38

³⁸ مكى, 1987, مرجع سابق, ص 336

³⁹ المصدر نفسه ص 341 و 344

⁴⁰ طرشونة, 1986, مرجع سابق, ص 37



Studies of the Movement of Theories

This is the study of theories and literary movements from country to country, and language to language, concentrating the changes which occur in this transfer. Some scholars have questioned if this should be considered part of Comparative Literature or is considered in the realm of history or social sciences.

Translation Studies

Translation has tended to be regarded as inferior to literature. Hilaire Belloc's view in his 1931 lecture sums up a situation that is still unhappily all too recognizable in some countries (Bennett, 1993).

“The art of translation is a subsidiary art and derivative. On this account it has never been granted the dignity of original work, and has suffered too much in the general judgement of letters... This corresponding misunderstanding of its character has added to its degradation: neither its importance nor its difficulty has been grasped.” (Belloc, 1931)

There are a range of views towards this type of study. Those who approached Comparative Literature from a binary perspective have stood firmly against the idea of translation, choosing to rely on reading original texts in the original languages (Bennett, 1993). Entiembles argues that translations are sometimes superior to the original. And other scholars point out that comparison between that translated literature is considered one of the Channels of Influence in Comparative Literature, connecting the authors of the original and translated texts (Bennett, 1993).

However, Translation Studies has been gaining ground. In the 1970's, a group of scholars led by Itamar Evan-Zohar, has fought against the hegemony of the original text over the text created for a new target audience (Bennett, 1993). Granted this strengthens the claim that translated works be considered literature, and thus worth studying. Yet, a question of what is being studied, the translation skills of the secondary author (some even claim that he is not an author) or is what is different in the translation the matter of study. So, is this considered Comparative Literature?



Conclusion

The goal of this paper has been to provide a well-rounded vision of Comparative Literature. And this includes exploring the areas of where scholars agree and disagree. Pointing out along the way, not all works that claim to be Comparative Literature are accepted within the field. The intent was not to prove that any one School or theoretical approach is superior to another. Rather, Comparative Literature was described as it is practiced by its own scholars, where it has been, and where it is going. And most importantly, the question is raised, “Where are the limits of Comparative Literature?”



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